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Chair: Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales ..... (Guatemala)
later: Mr. Remaoun ..... (Algeria)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

Agenda item 21: Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia) said that the Committee's work on the three dimensions of sustainable development had taken on new importance in the light of the growing threat to multilateralism, the increasing urgency of climate change and the slowing pace of global poverty reduction.

2. The need to make progress in the environmental dimension was highlighted by the plight of small island developing States and low-lying coastal areas facing the existential threat of climate change. While hopes were high for a fruitful twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Committee must also continue to directly address climate change in its own work.

3. The Committee had a responsibility to support financing for development and the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, placing special emphasis on addressing the specific economic challenges facing countries in special situations, with a view to reaching the furthest behind first. Efforts must also be redoubled to advance the empowerment of women and girls, without whom the Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved.

4. Estonia remained a committed leader of sustainable development efforts. For example, as President of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, it would focus on innovative environmental solutions and sustainable consumption and production. A joint project with the United Nations Development Programme had also been launched to help other Member States follow the path Estonia had taken to achieve its own development, which had been greatly accelerated through the adoption of information and communications technology and e-government solutions. If elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2020–2021, Estonia would strive to highlight the connection between sustainable development and peace in the work of that body.

5. While advances had been made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through reform of the United Nations development system, much remained to be done. The Committee should be guided by efficiency, equality and empathy to accelerate further progress.

6. **Ms. Ribeiro** (Timor-Leste) said that in a mere 16 years of independence, her country had laid the foundation for peace, stability and nation-building and was striving to become an upper middle income country by 2030. To that end, Timor-Leste was strengthening its non-oil economy through diversification, more and better job creation for young people and investment in such productive sectors as agriculture, tourism, fisheries and manufacturing, with a focus on private sector and rural development.

7. The strategic development plan that Timor-Leste had adopted for the period 2011–2030 had been fully harmonized with the Sustainable Development Goals. It covered the key areas of social capital, infrastructure development and economic development and was underpinned by strategies for creating an effective institutional framework and a strong microeconomic foundation. Following its early adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Government had immediately established a working group to integrate the Goals with its existing strategic plan.

8. As a small island developing State, post-conflict country and least developed country, Timor-Leste was keenly aware that it belonged to the States most vulnerable to being left behind. Member States, in particular its development partners, should therefore strengthen cooperation and allocate adequate resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

9. Timor-Leste, supported the reform of the United Nations development system to make it fit for purpose and welcomed the Secretary-General's strategy for financing the 2030 Agenda. It also welcomed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, which would increase access to scientific and technological solutions and promote integration into the global knowledge-based economy, and looked forward to presenting its first voluntary national review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019.

10. **Ms. Cordova Soria** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that in the last 12 years, the Government had prioritized eliminating poverty and reducing inequality through a development approach that harnessed the knowledge of its indigenous peoples, in harmony with nature. In that time, the country had tripled its per capita gross domestic product and had become a leader of economic growth in its region.

11. Specific measures aimed at reducing social inequality had made significant progress in closing the wealth gap and reducing extreme poverty. Substantial gains had also been made in increasing life expectancy and access to drinking water and basic sanitation, as well as in reducing infant mortality and chronic child undernutrition. Those achievements had resulted from natural resource exploitation by strategic enterprises, a pluralist economic model and a policy of wealth redistribution.

12. The 2030 Agenda was a framework for the concept of "vivir bien" (living well). While Mother Earth could go on living well without humanity, the reverse was not true. In that regard, while significant global efforts had been made to resolve the climate crisis, the problem could only be resolved by addressing its underlying causes. Chief among those were capitalism and its unsustainable models of production and consumption, which were a drain on Mother Earth and life itself.

13. The only way to promote sustainable development that adequately balanced the economic, social and environmental needs of current and future generations was to address the root causes of poverty and inequality at the national and international levels, namely: the capitalist model of development that exploited some to benefit others; excessive consumption and destructive production; and the prioritization of military spending, which sowed death and destruction, over development spending, which sustained and improved life.

14. **Ms. Muchiri** (Kenya) said that climate change was disrupting the livelihoods of millions of people in East Africa and provoking conflicts over dwindling resources, in particular arable land and water. Considering that agriculture underpinned most rural economies and constituted the backbone of its own economy, Kenya supported the call made by the Secretary-General for urgent action to ensure sustainable food productions systems, promote rural development and empower small-scale farmers in rural areas.

15. In implementing the 2030 Agenda, Kenya continued to emphasize domestic resource mobilization. In that regard, it had implemented a tax modernization programme to raise revenues.

16. The Government had continued to invest resources to encourage growth in the information and communications technology sector, which remained critical. Indeed, most government services were offered through that key sector. However, high speed connectivity remained a challenge worth overcoming given the jobs it stood to create, in particular for young people. The United Nations should therefore address the persistent digital divide that was most acutely felt by countries in the global South.

17. Kenya was proud to be the only country in the global South to host United Nations programmes, namely the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Environment Programme, and urged Member States to support the two forthcoming draft resolutions related to strengthening the functioning of their headquarters. Stakeholders from all sectors of the blue economy should also participate in the upcoming Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, which Kenya would be co-hosting with the Government of Canada. The Conference was focused on unleashing the untapped economic potential of global bodies of water to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

18. **Mr. Lamce** (Albania) said that the historic adoption of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system had marked the beginning of a new phase in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Albania looked forward to the concrete results of that reform.

19. The parliament of Albania had unanimously approved a resolution confirming its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and many governmental and non-governmental organizations alike were engaged in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, Albania had presented its first national voluntary review, which was fully compatible with its national strategic plan for development and integration into the European Union. Both the national voluntary review and the strategic plan encapsulated the same vision for development based on good governance, the rule of law, a competitive and sustainable economy, and the promotion of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Albania looked forward to a future decision to open accession negotiations with the European Union and remained committed to carrying out domestic reforms in key areas.

20. To achieve the Goals, Governments should partner with non-State actors to discover innovative solutions, promote good corporate governance, encourage the flow of targeted long-term investment, including foreign direct investment, and mobilize additional resources to support further development.

21. **Mr. Hajiyev** (Azerbaijan) said that the Committee had an indispensable leadership role to play in ensuring financing for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Azerbaijan continued to implement its own sustainable development strategy through the regional economic road maps it had adopted in 2016, which were designed

to facilitate its smooth transition from a traditional economy to one that was more diversified, competitive, resilient and innovative.

22. The Government was revising its national development policies and programmes to bring them into alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on poverty eradication, health care, education, gender, employment and infrastructure development.

23. As a landlocked developing country, Azerbaijan had a crucial stake in increasing access to international trade. It was a strong promoter of East-West, North-South and South-West international transport corridors and was pursuing the development of transport connectivity within regional and international organizations and in bilateral and trilateral contexts. Through those efforts, Azerbaijan was continuing to contribute to the sustainable development of Eurasia.

24. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that development could not be restricted to economic growth alone. In promoting integral human development, political, economic and financial systems must respect the dignity of every person and the identity of every nation.

25. Lamentable attempts had been witnessed in the Committee the previous year to shift the focus from integral human development to various controversial topics under discussion in the other Main Committees. As a result, debates about selected rights had eclipsed a more holistic approach to assessing people's needs. While respect for fundamental human rights and human dignity was essential for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of integral human development, the term "human rights" was in danger of becoming a rhetorical catch-all, endlessly expanded to suit the passing tastes of the age.

26. To approach the 2030 Agenda through an excessively economic, environmental, sociological or ideological lens was to forget the essential human dimension of development and ultimately undermine its purpose. Pope Francis had issued a warning to that effect in his remarks before the General Assembly in 2015, using the term "ideological colonization" to refer to the use of development models to impose an alien worldview or set of values on societies.

27. The Pope had also said that the social upheavals of the 1960s had given rise to claims to new rights that evinced a certain anthropological reductionism and strayed significantly from the vision of the human person upon which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was grounded. Paradoxically, there was a risk that modern forms of ideological colonization might take hold in the very name of human rights, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable.

28. The Holy See favoured a humanistic vision, one that allowed people to see one another as allies instead of competitors and to recognize that the legitimacy of an economic system depended not only on quantitative growth, but on its capacity to produce development for each man and woman. Under that vision, a rights-based approach must be balanced by a "responsibilities-based" approach.

29. **Mr. Louati** (Tunisia) said that it was clear from the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64) that conflict, climate change and inequality were the main factors fuelling the spread of malnutrition, swelling the numbers of displaced people and hindering efforts to achieve those Goals. African countries, in particular, were suffering the consequences, with rising levels of poverty, unemployment and marginalization. They needed more support from the international community.

30. The key aspects of his Government's national development plan for the period 2016–2020 were: good governance; efforts to boost the economy; human development and social integration; regional development; and the green economy. The reform process in Tunisia was ongoing, especially in the areas of public administration, tax collection, efforts to curb corruption, and justice and security. In line with Goal 16, his Government was working to build a peaceful, inclusive and just society by reducing poverty, improving conditions in marginalized areas of the interior and vulnerable sectors of society, stimulating employment and improving infrastructure. Education, health care, especially sexual and reproductive health care, and women's rights and gender equality were priorities. Empowering women and young people was crucial for achieving the Goals.

31. The global partnership for sustainable development must be reactivated to help developing countries, especially middle-income countries and those in transition. Aside from funding and technology transfer, they needed support to industrialize, improve infrastructure and invest in emerging sectors. They also needed help to build resilience to the effects of climate change. Greater cooperation was needed to combat flows of illicit finance, tax evasion and corruption and to recover misappropriated funds that had been earmarked to fund development projects. Tunisia stood by its commitment to lend its expertise to other Arab and African countries in the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation.

32. Tunisia welcomed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which would be signed in Marrakesh, Morocco, in December 2018, and the reform process of the United Nations development system, which must be made more effective and transparent.

33. **Ms. Mucavi** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that rising global hunger was undermining the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2. That alarming trend was being driven by climate extremes, conflict, protracted crises and continued economic sluggishness in many countries. Despite increasing urbanization, rural areas were generally further behind on progress towards Goals 1, 2, 6 and 7.

34. At the same time, obesity was on the rise in many developing countries. Hunger and obesity often coexisted under the same roof and might even affect the same person at different stages of his or her life. That paradox was evidence of broken food systems.

35. Investments such as making agriculture more resilient and sustainable, supporting family farming, creating decent jobs in rural and urban areas, and strengthening social protection would help improve food security and nutrition, contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation and address inequalities between rural and urban areas and between men and women.

36. The Food and Agriculture Organization would be hosting an upcoming symposium to facilitate a discussion from the family farmer perspective and propose pathways and interventions to help them unlock the potential benefits of agricultural innovation.

37. **Ms. Carpentier** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that it was crucial to improve cooperation between United Nations Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva and to revitalize the UNCTAD intergovernmental process to better align it with the 2030 Agenda, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the repositioned United Nations development system and the broader international architecture.

38. With the established process for considerations of multilateral trade rules effectively frozen, many countries saw UNCTAD as a safe space in which to engage and consider issues related to trade and development, such as the digital economy, with a view to gradually building an international consensus. The revitalization of UNCTAD was aimed at strengthening the consensus-building role of the Trade and Development Board and its various meetings.

Agenda item 21: Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

(A/73/83–E/2018/62 and A/73/307)

39. **Ms. Sharif** (Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/73/307), said that the report included an update on the work of the open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/226 to examine different options for strengthening the oversight that Member States exercised over UN-Habitat. The expected outcome of deliberations on the new governance structure for UN-Habitat was a more trusted, transparent and accountable body that was capable of greater and more tangible impact, in addition to being more fit for purpose and effective.

40. For its part, the open-ended working group had invited Governments to continue to work towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and to support key priority areas such as capacity-building and the establishment of inclusive partnerships, especially between national and local governments. It had found that UN-Habitat needed to continue to strengthen its collaboration with the regional commissions and the United Nations system to provide regionally appropriate guidance in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda towards achieving the Goals. It had also found that innovative financing mechanisms were key and had encouraged Member States to support the introduction of an urban window in the Sustainable Development Goals Fund. In the light of those findings and recommendations, the Committee must now take the requisite decisions to enable UN-Habitat to bounce back, including arriving at a consensus on its governance structure. Programme leadership and staff were committed to gaining back trust.

41. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (A/73/83–E/2018/62), she said that the report highlighted the need to adopt a reporting system that remained country-led, built on the current work of United Nations agencies and development partners, but also integrated the actions of a wide range of stakeholders for synergetic results.

42. In that context, UN-Habitat was increasing cooperation with the regional commissions, supporting regional ministerial conferences and stakeholder mobilization, facilitating inter-agency collaboration, building Sustainable Development Goal-monitoring capacity and co-producing knowledge. It was also increasingly focused on localizing the Goals, working closely with the United Nations Development Programme and United Cities and Local Governments, including on the creation of a knowledge platform. National urban policies also remained an important tool. UN-Habitat and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development continued to monitor progress and compile their findings in Global State of National Urban Policy.

43. In countries affected by conflict, UN-Habitat was continuing to increase its impact through its integrated urban programming. The Programme had also expanded the use of its urban profiling tools to develop a shared analysis guiding humanitarian and development efforts in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic.

44. UN-Habitat was continuing to strengthen its collaboration with the rest of the United Nations system, working towards a more system-wide approach to sustainable urbanization and adding its urban expertise to other global priorities, including migration, gender, youth and climate change. Many United Nations entities had already developed a strategy or plan for implementing the New Urban Agenda.

45. Despite some positive notes, the core financial situation of UN-Habitat was highly problematic. On the one hand, demand remained strong for its support of country programmes and for its normative and operational services and products, with income for earmarked normative programmes exceeding the biennial budget by 28 per cent and income for regional and country programmes (technical cooperation) standing at 89 per cent of the biennial budget. On the other hand, non-earmarked contributions stood at just $2.8 million. While that slight improvement since June 2018 demonstrated the trust Member States had placed in UN-Habitat, the figure was still low relative to the annual budget of $13 million, putting the core capacity of the Programme at risk.

46. A change process had been initiated to enhance competency, accountability, transparency, trust, efficiency and effectiveness. She was therefore grateful to the Governments of Sweden and Norway for their support in that area, and to the Government of Malaysia in particular, which had committed $1 million in non-earmarked contributions and $250,000 in earmarked contributions.

47. **Ms. Elgarf** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that sustainable urban development and human settlements could be key drivers of sustainable development in national and subnational development plans. Much of the world's rapid urban population growth was taking place in developing countries and the New Urban Agenda represented a vision of cities and human settlements characterized by quality of life, equity, environmental sustainability and economic inclusivity. It recognized the roles of cities and human settlements as a positive force for achieving sustainable development.

48. As the entity responsible for the implementation and review of the New Urban Agenda and related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, UN-Habitat required continuous re-engineering to ensure that it remained fit for purpose. The Programme continued to play a critical role in developing international norms, values and principles on sustainable urbanization and human settlements; in assisting countries to address challenges arising from rapid urbanization and inadequate human settlements; and in providing technical expertise and capacity-building through domestication and project implementation in over 90 countries.

49. However, the challenges of urbanization had multiplied in number and complexity since UN-Habitat was created in the 1970s, often requiring immediate attention. The dynamism and rapid evolution of cities, towns and human settlements, compounded by growing populations and increasing poverty, required a more responsive, effective and better-resourced Programme, taking into account the financial situation of Member States.

50. Lastly, the Group was greatly concerned by the urgent need to properly fund UN-Habitat. Voluntary contributions must be secured to support the normative and operational work of the Programme, enabling it to strengthen efforts at the international and local levels.

51. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that urbanization was a necessary driver of economic growth. Indeed, no country had ever ascended to middle-income status without a significant rural-to-urban shift in population. However, unplanned urban growth could lead to worsened socioeconomic inequalities and risks and to environmental degradation. That, in turn, would present massive sustainability challenges, including in respect of housing, infrastructure, basic services and food security. Therefore, the New Urban Agenda remained highly

critical for the localization and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. ASEAN viewed continued sustainable development and urbanization as a huge challenge. By 2030, almost half of the total population in South-East Asia would be urban. That trend was driven significantly by the growth of medium-sized cities, with populations ranging from 200,000 to 2 million. They often did not have the capacity to deal with the pressures of urbanization, unlike more established metropolitan cities.

53. With rapid urbanization placing significant demands and stress on infrastructure, sustainable infrastructure was imperative. To ensure the intensification of infrastructure development efforts and cooperation, ASEAN had recently established a lead implementing body for the sustainable infrastructure component of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025. Its work would be critical in view of ASEAN countries' annual infrastructure investment needs of at least $110 billion.

54. The impetus for directing national efforts toward sustainable urbanization and environmentally sustainable cities was provided by the Master Plan and by the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Blueprint 2025. ASEAN had subsequently announced the establishment of its smart cities network, a collaborative platform that supported smart and sustainable urban development and used technology to improve lives by synergizing development efforts, sharing best practices and catalysing more opportunities for growth, innovation, capacity-building and sustainable development.

55. ASEAN had taken an active interest in the issue of urbanization, with Malaysia hosting the ninth World Urban Forum in 2018. The adopted outcome document from the Forum provided a useful reference point for re-energizing commitment to the New Urban Agenda.

56. **Mr. Herrera Molina** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the Community welcomed the New Urban Agenda and was committed to supporting its follow-up and review process. In addressing how cities and human settlements were planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed, the New Urban Agenda would contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. CELAC had developed a regional action plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2016–2036, in which national authorities supported a shift towards a new urban paradigm that recognized the city as a macro-level public good, where the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights of all were guaranteed.

57. There should be a balance between the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, with its normative work integrated into its operational work and the experience gained in the operational field fed into its normative work, in line with the principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda and in support of the implementation of the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

58. In accordance with its role as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements, UN-Habitat should collaborate with other United Nations programmes and entities, Member States, local authorities and relevant stakeholders, to contribute to a United Nations system-wide strategy. It should continue generating evidence-based and practical guidance for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, and further develop the action framework for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in close consultation with Member States, local authorities and stakeholders.

59. In order to achieve the necessary reform of the governance structures of UN-Habitat, the balanced package outlined in the findings and recommendations of the open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/226 must be maintained. An effective country-led follow-up and review mechanism that promoted the full, effective and timely implementation of the New Urban Agenda should also be developed.

60. **Ms. Carey** (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the New Urban Agenda provided the international community with a comprehensive set of actions that could contribute to social inclusion, environmental protection and economic growth in urban areas over the next 20 years.

61. By 2030 much of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean would live in urban areas. However, an unfortunate feature of rapid urbanization in the Caribbean was the creation of a housing deficit that had resulted in a large share of the population living in informal settlements that were disproportionately affected by landslides, flooding, sea surges and earthquakes. The need to protect homes against rising sea levels was a particular concern, given that more than half of the population in the region lived within five kilometres of the coastline.

62. The region would therefore need to focus on strengthening building codes, enhancing the resilience

of communities and incorporating a greener and more sustainable ethos into policy formulation, among other areas. In addition to focusing on the environment, climate change and resilience, the New Urban Agenda should also pay due attention to such issues as adequate housing, urban and territorial planning, urban governance, water and sanitation and sustainable mobility. Furthermore, the New Urban Agenda must be implemented with a focus on human rights and gender equality, prioritizing the equity and sustainability of human settlements as a means for the full development of all.

63. The role of UN-Habitat in forging partnerships for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at all levels was pivotal. CARICOM noted with appreciate the various activities performed by UN-Habitat, fully supported its role as the focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements programmes and welcomed strategies to strengthen the governance structure of UN-Habitat in order to make it more fit for purpose.

64. **Mr. Al Shuaibi** (Oman), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that Arab economies had been transitioning from agricultural to industrial since the 1940s and, as a consequence, many Arab cities were ringed by informal settlements created by migrants from the countryside. In 2015, the Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction of the League of Arab States had approved the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030. That Strategy was built around six objectives that were in line with those of Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

65. The Group had submitted a position paper to the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), and had taken part in creating the zero draft of the New Urban Agenda and the Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All. The Arab States regarded the outcomes of Habitat III as a reference for urban planning in their region.

66. Wars in the Arab region were creating large numbers of refugees. He called on UN-Habitat to help those refugees by mobilizing humanitarian assistance, which should not be counted as part of official development assistance. He also drew attention to the funding crisis being faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). That crisis was creating burdens not only for the refugees themselves but also for the major host States, which were Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

67. **Mr. Sawant** (India) said that the New Urban Agenda set a new global standard for sustainable urban development and had important synergies with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

68. One sixth of the global population lived in India, where urbanization had become an important determinant of rapid economic growth and poverty reduction: its urban areas generated over two thirds of gross domestic product and accounted for 90 per cent of government revenues. Ongoing national efforts to manage rapid urbanization through innovative and dynamic measures complemented international efforts to chart a New Urban Agenda.

69. His Government, which was fully conscious of the challenges and opportunities offered by urbanization, was currently implementing not only the world's largest sanitation and hygiene programmes but also the world's largest housing programme for the poor. The Government aimed to build 11 million affordable homes for urban Indians by the year 2022 and had launched a smart cities initiative to strengthen urban infrastructure and give citizens a decent quality of life and a clean and sustainable environment. To ease pressure on larger urban centres, connectivity to smaller cities was also being improved using green and clean energy.

70. His delegation supported the open-ended working group's recommendations for reform of the intergovernmental structure of UN-Habitat and called for action to effectively address the problem of its declining funding.

71. **Ms. Reem Al Saud** (Saudi Arabia) said that cities had the potential to create enabling environments for sustainable development. UN-Habitat should play a leading role in promoting the new concepts reflected in the New Urban Agenda. Her country's rapid economic growth had dramatically increased its number of cities, and her Government had developed an urban strategy that was in line with the 2030 Agenda. The Kingdom had worked with UN-Habitat to implement programmes designed to create better urban environments by combating congestion and urban sprawl. Her Government was cooperating with the private sector to implement modern and sustainable approaches, with special attention to the concerns of young people, women and persons with special needs.

72. **Mr. Naumkin** (Russian Federation) said that the role of UN-Habitat as the focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements within the United Nations system was only set to increase in

importance. In that context, his delegation welcomed the ongoing efforts of the Executive Director and her team to strengthen UN-Habitat. The reforms undertaken should enhance the effectiveness of its work and build the necessary capacities for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

73. In recent years a number of events on urban settlements had been organized in the Russian Federation in conjunction with UN-Habitat, including at the World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Sochi in October 2017, and at the 2018 Moscow Urban Forum.

74. The Moscow office of UN-Habitat had recently become the subregional division for project coordination in the Commonwealth of Independent States. That change of status would help to increase programme implementation at the regional level, with financial support from the Russian Federation.

75. Lastly, his delegation expressed its appreciation to the Executive Director for agreeing to participate in the work of the Expert Council for Sustainable Development of the Urban Environment under the Russian Ministry of Construction, Housing and Public Utilities.

76. **Ms. Lora-santos** (Philippines) said that her delegation supported the ongoing efforts to strengthen UN-Habitat for the effective implementation of its mandate, particularly with respect to the New Urban Agenda. Her Government was committed to the robust implementation of the New Urban Agenda and to a strong, transparent and efficient UN-Habitat in line with the ongoing reforms within the United Nations.

77. While half of the population of the Philippines currently lived in cities, urban dwellers were expected to account for up to 84 per cent of the national population by 2050. Rapid urbanization was an indication of economic development, but it also led to challenges related to increased demand for jobs, housing, infrastructure and basic services. Development frameworks had therefore been adopted to address those challenges for urban and urbanizing areas. The aim was to make urban spaces more inclusive and to create more open, connected and collectively resilient communities.

78. The New Urban Agenda had itself been localized through the national development plan for the period 2017–2022. Her Government's partnership with UN-Habitat, particularly in the area of climate resilience, had assisted in enhancing the technical capacity both of local governments and of the national Government. The work of UN-Habitat on the ground had also empowered local actors to address the New Urban Agenda.

79. **Mr. Tan** (Singapore) said that his country had always sought to balance environmental sustainability with economic development and social inclusion. That entailed a holistic, long-term and integrated approach to urban planning, underpinned by collaborative multi-stakeholder partnerships. Examples included the Smart Urban Habitat Masterplan, developed by government agencies and the private sector to make towns more livable, efficient and sustainable; the "super low energy" programme introduced to encourage cost-efficient and energy-efficient designs; and the "cities of tomorrow" programme designed to encourage investment in research and development efforts across all disciplines involved in the built environment. Furthermore, as the Chair of ASEAN, Singapore had championed the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, which provided a joint framework to leverage innovate technological solutions for the development of smart cities in the region.

80. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 and fully implement the New Urban Agenda, Governments would similarly need to jointly leverage technology and advance innovative solutions in collaboration with other countries and stakeholders. Singapore was committed to sharing its experiences, programmes and partnerships with fellow developing countries in the spirit of South-South cooperation, and to ensuring that no one and no city was left behind.

81. **Mr. Muhammad Bande** (Nigeria) said that implementing the New Urban Agenda could accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. His delegation welcomed the increased understanding of the central role that cities played in sustainable development and was also pleased to note that UN-Habitat was supporting the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa to integrate urbanization into national development planning, with a focus on strengthening economic and spatial policies in line with Agenda 2063 of the African Union and Sustainable Development Goal 11.

82. The 2030 Agenda presented an opportunity to build well-planned, inclusive, equitable, economically productive and resilient settlements in cities and in rural areas. The right to adequate housing went beyond building houses to promoting access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing. However, urgent remedial strategies were needed to address the phenomenal rate at which urbanization was taking place in developing countries, especially in Africa. In that regard, UN-Habitat would continue to provide valuable assistance in defining the focus and direction of national initiatives for the development of sustainable human settlements.

83. To address rapid urbanization in Nigeria and the concomitant implications for youth unemployment, the Government was consciously implementing its integrated Change Agenda in which plans, policies, and programmes had been outlined to empower Nigerians and improve their standard of living. National housing and urban development policies had also been revised to meet the needs of Nigerians, with due consideration given to women, youth and vulnerable groups.

84. His Government remained committed to the Abuja Declaration for Habitat III, adopted at the Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for Habitat III in 2016. Recognizing that every Nigerian had the right to decent accommodation, regardless of social status or place of residence, the Government was seeking to reduce the housing deficit and to boost the number of mortgages. Innovative approaches were also being adopted to address such issues as slum eradication, urban sprawl and access to basic services. For example, under the UN-Habitat Water for African Cities Programme, clean drinking water was being supplied to people in the peri-urban areas of the city of Jos in Nigeria.

85. **Mr. Kafle** (Nepal) said that the establishment of peaceful, inclusive, resilient and sustainable human settlements required the timely, effective and full implementation of the New Urban Agenda. It would therefore be necessary to make UN-Habitat fit-for-purpose, including by improving its governance structure, so that it could better assist Member States in tackling the challenges of sustainable urbanization. A balance should also be maintained between core and earmarked funding to support the activities of UN-Habitat.

86. Like many other developing countries, Nepal was experiencing a rapid pace of urbanization and was facing a number of challenges, primarily due to the rural-to-urban-migration of people in search of economic opportunities and better lives. Moreover, as a landlocked least developed country emerging from conflict and prone to natural disasters, Nepal was cognizant of the fact that it needed to have comprehensive and forward-looking urban plans and policies which also integrated resilience-building programmes.

87. While the Constitution of Nepal stated that housing was a fundamental right, in order for that principle to become a reality it would be necessary to implement the relevant national urban plans and policies and, with the support of UN-Habitat, to adapt the New Urban Agenda to local urban plans and policies. Accordingly, his Government was working closely with all stakeholders at the national and local levels to make Nepalese cities both resilient and sustainable. However, those efforts would also need to be complemented by international cooperation in the form of investment, technology transfer and capacity-building support.

88. **Ms. Engelbrecht Schadtler** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, in order to continue strengthening the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, it was necessary to reiterate the importance of international cooperation, particularly the commitments undertaken by developed countries with respect to financing and technology transfer.

89. Her Government was committed to urban planning that respected the environment and was seeking to provide housing for all, particularly the most vulnerable persons, thereby contributing to the eradication of poverty in accordance with the 2030 Agenda.

90. Access to housing was a constitutional right and a shared obligation between citizens and the Government, which ensured that the necessary social policies were in place. For example, under the Great Venezuelan Housing Mission, 2.1 million homes had been distributed to families in need since 2011, and under the Great Mission Barrio Nuevo–Barrio Tricolor some 644,422 homes had been restored for over 2.8 million Venezuelans.

91. Despite the economic challenges that had drastically reduced the budgetary funds available, her Government remained committed to providing decent housing to every family in Venezuela that needed it.

92. **Mr. Irawan** (Indonesia) said that the international community must move quickly to plan for sustainable urban growth and to provide basic services, infrastructure and affordable housing. In particular, local actions must be supported to plan, manage and implement transformative policies under the New Urban Agenda.

93. Local governments had a vital role to play in decision-making and their collaboration with local populations had proven effective in creating greener, cleaner and healthier cities. However, many local governments in developing countries needed capacity-building and support in planning, financing, developing, building, governing and managing their cities.

94. It was also important to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient, particularly to address the adverse impacts of climate change. In order to reduce such vulnerabilities, increased cooperation was needed between States and the United Nations system in the area of disaster risk reduction and management as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. UN-Habitat should

develop action plans for rebuilding cities and human settlements struck by natural disasters.

95. His delegation fully supported the reform of the governance system of UN-Habitat proposed by the open-ended working group, which would strengthen oversight by Member States and attract sustainable and predictable funding for the organization.

96. **Mr. Lu** Yuhui (China) said that the building of sustainable cities and human settlements should take into account the level of economic development and population growth, and the international community, particularly developed countries, should take steps in that regard to help developing countries build the necessary capacities. His delegation supported the coordinating role played by UN-Habitat in promoting sustainable urban development worldwide and the achievement of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

97. Reform of UN-Habitat should improve the efficiency and strengthen the capacities of UN-Habitat to better assist Member States, especially developing countries; maintain the intergovernmental nature of UN-Habitat, be guided and led by Member States and have its decisions agreed upon by Member State by consensus; focus on development and on meeting the needs and addressing the concerns of developing countries; and uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to ensure adequate funding.

98. His Government had embraced the development concepts of innovation, coordination, the green economy, openness and shared benefits. Urbanization had been a strong driver for the economic growth over China, which had experienced the most rapid pace and largest scale of urbanization in the world over the past 40 years. Moving forward, his Government would work with the international community to address the challenges of global urbanization.

99. **Mr. Fox-Drummond Gough** (Brazil) said that sustainable cities must be inclusive, affordable, accessible, safe and resilient, in accordance with the main principles of the right to cities. The implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban related Sustainable Development Goals depended on the active involvement of multiple stakeholders, in particular local governments and civil society. However, in order to adequately respond to the challenges posed by the New Urban Agenda and the Goals, the United Nations agencies and programmes involved with urban development, particularly UN-Habitat, must be strengthened.

100. His delegation commended the open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/226 for examining options to strengthen the oversight of UN-Habitat and for considering the appropriateness of its financial rules and regulations, as well as personnel, procurement and budgetary matters. The set of findings and recommendations agreed by the working group represented a carefully crafted compromise. In particular, the recommended governance structure would greatly help to overcome not only the discrepancy between normative and operational functions, but also the disproportion between non-earmarked core funding and technical cooperation funds. The new structure would also allow UN-Habitat to address its dire financial challenges.

101. However, as the implications of any reform to the current structure were complex, colleagues in Nairobi who were more familiar with the challenges and needs of UN-Habitat had been requested to engage in specific negotiations to propose a framework for the reforms. In the meantime, it would be important to retain the package agreed in the findings and recommendations of the working group and to avoid repeating the discussions that had already taken place in Nairobi as that that would risk further delaying the reform of UN-Habitat.

102. **Mr. Abebe** (Ethiopia) said that the New Urban Agenda reaffirmed the global commitment to sustainable urban development and its implementation could accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to address urban realities, it was also important to fully implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the other internationally agreed development frameworks. His delegation therefore welcomed the coordinating role played by UN-Habitat within the United Nations system.

103. The full implementation of the New Urban Agenda required a paradigm shift at the national, regional and international levels. While preserving its intergovernmental nature, a reformed UN-Habitat had an important role to play in supporting the implementation efforts of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. UN-Habitat should therefore be provided with more political and financial support.

104. His Government had been continuing to implement the New Urban Agenda through a comprehensive urban development package that was focused on matters such as decentralization, housing, small and medium enterprises, and social and physical

infrastructure. The Government's integrated housing programme had been successful in addressing the housing shortage, creating job opportunities for youth and expanding the construction sector. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat had been providing normative and technical assistance for the programme, alongside the bilateral and multilateral development partners of Ethiopia.

105. To address the problem of urban unemployment, the Government had also been implementing an entrepreneurship strategy that aimed to create an enabling business environment, including through the provision of training and credit services.

106. Urban transformation could be a catalyst for economic growth and development. The Government would therefore be redoubling its efforts to pursue a sustainable urban development agenda that benefited all sections of society. Such national efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda should be supported by the United Nations and other development partners, particularly in the areas of urban finance and technology transfer.

107. **Mr. Andanje** (Kenya) said that his country was privileged to host UN-Habitat in Nairobi and highly valued the contribution that it made to sustainable urbanization around the world. Over the years, the responsibilities of UN-Habitat had changed considerably in terms of their scope and complexity. His delegation welcomed the role played by UN-Habitat in developing international norms and assisting national Governments to meet their agreed commitments, including under the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also appreciated the contribution made around the world by UN-Habitat to improving basic services, such as waste management, water supply, sanitation, access to renewable energy and sustainable transport.

108. After 14 years of discussions on how to reform UN-Habitat, the findings and recommendations of the open-ended working group provided an opportunity for decisive action to address its dire financial situation. Only a strengthened UN-Habitat would be able to fulfil its expanded mandate. In that context, his delegation called on Member States to support the relevant draft resolution on UN-Habitat to be put forward at the current session and to adopt a holistic, practical and constructive approach during the negotiating process. With the support of Member States, the new Executive Director of UN-Habitat would succeed in reforming the organization so that it could better deliver on its mandate.

109. Commending Sweden and Norway for providing significant funding to facilitate the change process at UN-Habitat and expressing his gratitude to Malaysia for pledging $1 million in non-earmarked funding and $250,000 in earmarked funding to UN-Habitat, he said that it was very clear that the Executive Director was building trust with Member States through a consultative approach characterized by openness, transparency and accountability.

110. **Mr. Mayong Onon** (Malaysia) said that rapid and unbridled city growth and urban migration, if not properly addressed and managed, could exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities. Given the need to address such emerging urban challenges, his delegation supported the Executive Director's proposed reform of UN-Habitat and other efforts to improve its transparency, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

111. Malaysia had made a major contribution to the international community's efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda by hosting the ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018. It supported the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030, which outlined actionable recommendations to accelerate the New Urban Agenda and called for an enhanced role for UN-Habitat as a focal point within the United Nations system.

112. His Government recognized the synergies between the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework. It also acknowledged the need for strong cooperation and strategic collaboration to address the diverse challenges of urbanization.

113. **Mr. Alami** (Morocco) said that the rapid rate of urbanization in his country, which currently stood at 60.3 per cent, was explained by a combination of population growth, urban migration, the creation of new urban centres and urban sprawl. Cities were major hubs of job creation, driving economic, social and technological development, but they were also the greatest sources of environmental stress and social disparities.

114. His Government was committed to sustainable development and had made notable progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, including by eradicating slums, restructuring disadvantaged neighbourhoods and diversifying housing options. It had also enacted legislation to improve energy efficiency in buildings and, in September 2016, had submitted its intended nationally determined contribution under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 17 per cent by 2030. The expected mitigation effort by

the residential and tertiary sector to achieve the overall target between 2020 and 2030 was 7.6 per cent.

115. While multiple challenges related to sustainable urban management remained to be addressed in Morocco, his Government stood ready to share its relevant experience within the framework of South-South cooperation, reiterated its commitment to UN-Habitat and called for increased financial resources to be mobilized to support its work.

116. **Mr. Tōnē** (Tonga) said that effective partnerships were critical for empowering cities to address the multiple challenges they faced, especially in small island developing States with limited resources such as Tonga. His Government specifically wished to thank the European Union, the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Australia for the genuine and durable partnerships that had contributed to its effort to promote sustainable urbanization.

117. Tonga fully supported the ongoing work of the United Nations and UN-Habitat. As an accelerator for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11, the New Urban Agenda offered a welcome opportunity for the global community to address the urgent challenges associated with growing inequalities, social exclusion, extreme poverty, high unemployment and increased risks from climate change.

118. Like other Pacific small island developing States, Tonga had cities and urban settlement in coastal and low-lying areas that were particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. More focused efforts were needed to find ways to ensure that their urban settlements were inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

119. At the national level, the Government had enacted the National Spatial Planning and Management Act of 2012 and had established the Urban Management Agency to promote communities that were resilient and had better access to basic services.

120. *Mr. Remaoun (Algeria) took the Chair.*

121. **Mr. Akamba** (Cameroon) said that cities were drivers of socioeconomic development that offered significant opportunities while also posing grave challenges. Cameroon had fully endorsed the vision of sustainable urban development adopted under the New Urban Agenda and had aligned its national policies with the decisions taken within the framework of Habitat III.

122. His Government aimed to promote the emergence of peripheral areas and the development of cities where people could carry out economic activities in a fair, inclusive and environmentally friendly manner. However, the rapid rate of urban population growth in Cameroon was posing challenges related to housing, security, transport and the supply of vital resources. In response, a number of steps had been taken at the national level to foster partnerships, manage urban growth, protect the environment, promote reasonable land use and address the housing shortage, including a social housing scheme under which 10,000 new homes were being built in Youndé and Douala. Land banks were also financing the construction of thousands of public housing units.

123. Despite the Government's ongoing reform efforts, a lack of sufficient financial and technological resources was impeding sustainable urban development in Cameroon. It therefore welcomed two cooperation agreements recently concluded with UN-Habitat for additional urban development funds and called for increased international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations to build smart and green cities. To that end, the role of UN-Habitat should be significantly strengthened, its mandate expanded and the appropriate level of funding provided.

124. **Ms. Al-Ali** (United Arab Emirates) said that young people were not only the future, but also the present. Her Government had established youth councils to involve young people in decision-making on issues of concern to them. Her country's experience had shown that pluralism, peaceful coexistence and tolerance were essential to sustainable development in an urban environment. Women, children, young people, older persons and persons with disabilities all should have access to the possibilities offered by life in cities.

125. The United Arab Emirates had established Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, a carbon-neutral city that used primarily solar energy and had already become an international hub of research and commerce. In the past year, it had also launched the Imagine Abu Dhabi initiative to solicit innovative ideas for future planning and investment. The United Arab Emirates-Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund was a model for international cooperation to address climate change. In February 2018, Dubai had hosted the first Arab Land Conference, which had issued recommendations in a number of areas, including the rights of farmers and women. The World Bank's Doing Business 2018 report had ranked the United Arab Emirates tenth globally and first among Arab States in the "registering property" category. Her country would be the first Arab country to host the World Urban Forum in 2020, during its tenth session, which would coincide with her country's golden jubilee.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.